

American Board of Commissioners for
Foreign Missions.

A CRY TO HEAVEN FROM A
HOUSETOP.*

WE have stories to tell such as angels love to hear—stories of what God hath wrought in calling poor souls out of darkness and despair into his light and his love. It has often seemed to me that the more unsophisticated these souls are the more remarkable is his guidance.

Here is an example. A poor little girl of thirteen was given in marriage and separated from her mother and her comfortable home, where custom hardly permitted her to finish her childhood. Years of sorrow and trouble followed. Little ones came and soon perished. She was strong and con-

* The scene of this is laid in Turkey.

scientious in the old way, but it was not the way that made Christ the personal Friend of the distressed, the one blessed hope and refuge of the needy soul. She revered the forms of religion; she was scrupulous in observing days, abstaining from meats, conforming to ceremonies. The last of her children was dying with croup. One hope only remained. She would take it to the holy church and have the priest read the Testament over it. It was in the dead of night. She arose, wrapped the little girl in a blanket, and carried her to the church. In a piteous, pleading voice, at the door where the priest slept, she called:

“O holy father! I kiss thy feet. Rise, I entreat, and say prayers over my dying child! Maybe it will save her. It is my only dear little one.”

The priest arose, lighted a taper, and led the distressed woman into the sacred place. She bowed with the sick child as he held the book over their heads and read the holy words in an unknown tongue; but they were holy words, and this was a holy priest, and this was the holy church! Long did he read as she knelt sobbing and sighing, as the child in her arms gasped for breath

and was sinking into the stupor of death. Often did she hear the name of Christ pronounced, but knew not how to go straight to him with her woe.

The prayers were over. She took her precious burden and went forth out of the dark church into the dark streets and the cold night air to her sad home. Groaning and crying she entered and shut the door upon her desolation. Her husband was gone, her only child was breathing its last. That was gone too.

There are agonies which one would think would make the guardian angels weep. Wan and woebegone she saw the people come to take her dead child away. Then she shrieked and wailed and fell into the arms of the women about her, who wailed with her, but could do nothing more. God hears these wails the world over!

Was not the misery deep enough? No! Her husband was gone, his last heir was gone, and his relatives came to take the property, which by law they could claim. Pity there was none. The furniture of her house, even that which she had brought with her at her marriage, that which she had made with her own hands, was claimed

according to the law and ruthlessly taken. Her husband had died without making his will known in regard to his possessions, and she could hold nothing save that which was upon her person.

She became a wife a second time, to be left alone again, childless and friendless. There came another day when, no longer able to hold the house she was lodging in, all her poor scanty effects were put forth into the street and she knew not where to go. In the extremity of hopeless wretchedness she looked forth from that door upon a wide and heartless world. Then she turned and went up on the flat mud roof where she might be as near the heavens as possible, whence she faintly hoped she might make God hear—God who dwells on high, so far removed from human woe! She fell down on her knees, and looking up cried: “O God, thou hast taken away my husband, thou hast taken away my children, thou hast taken away all my possessions. I am a helpless soul turned into the streets. Now God, send me a comforter! O God, send me some comforter!”

Her cry seemed to rise and be lost in empty space. There was neither voice nor

sound. The sun shone on; the winds went by; the sparrows twittered upon the house-tops. They had their nests, but she had not where to lay her head. O, that God were not so far off!

But the heavens had heard her cry. God is not afar off. Long years had he watched that poor soul in fatherly pity. That very day he sent the comforter. Before the sun went down the feet that bear good tidings had found her out. The evangelist had opened the blessed New Testament and preached unto her Jesus — had shown her her Saviour and Friend. She listened and lived. She laid hold of the hope set before her and the new life began within her. Gradually more and more light dawned. She learned, with painful effort, to read the precious words. When she found the saying, "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance," she cried, with tears of joy, "That means me!"

The Lord guided her to other comfort. She found relief from poverty and a comfortable dwelling place and useful occupation and the blessed opportunity of comforting other needy souls. Her words were burning words. Compassed with infirmi-

ties and with as many faults as we Christians generally manifest, she nevertheless loved her Lord sincerely. To him she told her needs and sorrows as a friend speaks to a friend, and from him she got the needed help. Many an answer to her prayers seemed almost a direct interposition and a literal granting of the thing asked. To how many hundreds has she told her story and made known the way of life and comfort! How many poor, crushed hearts has she consoled with the words of life—the words of Him who spake as never man spake!

There came a time when this poor woman stood up before assemblies of ladies in a favored Christian land and told them they had no idea what they owed to the gospel. She told of her sorrows and her comfort. She said: "Ladies, when you get to heaven and see them coming from all lands to that happy place, you will be glad that you helped to send them the gospel!" Tears fell like rain all around.

The poor woman was right. We have so many blessings that we do not know how much the gospel is worth. What is any

honor or reward the whole world has to give compared with the blessed privilege of making known the gospel to a fellow creature?

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